

Medical Practice Questions

EDITOR'S NOTE: *From time to time medical practice questions of general interest are referred to the Scientific Board by the Peer Review Commission of the California Medical Association. Each is sent to members of the appropriate Scientific Advisory Panel.* Their responses are collated, reviewed and then submitted to the Peer Review Commission as the Scientific Board's opinion on the scientific and practice aspects of the question. The Commission adds suggestions to assist peer review units and authorizes publication.*

These opinions and positions are informational only and are not intended to be used as instructions, directives or policy statements. The appropriateness of care in individual cases should not be determined by these answers, but should be reviewed by local peer review committees.

Questions and reprint requests may be submitted to the Medical Practice Questions Committee, Peer Review Commission, California Medical Association, 731 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Repository Emulsion Therapy

QUESTION:

Is repository emulsion therapy in the treatment of allergy conditions considered accepted medical practice? (Asked by Blue Shield of California)

OPINION:

In the opinion of the Advisory Panel on Allergy, repository emulsion therapy has not proved to be of sufficient benefit to be recommended.

Electroshock

QUESTION:

What are the medical indications and contraindications for electroconvulsive therapy? (Asked by Peer Review Commission, California Medical Association)

OPINION:

In the opinion of the Advisory Panels on Psychiatry and Neurology, electroshock therapy is a well-established treatment for certain psychiatric disorders. It is principally used in cases of severe depression—depression unresponsive to psychotherapy or medication, or which is life-threatening and requires immediate intervention. Acute schizoaffective schizophrenia is commonly treated by electroshock, as are catatonia, involutional states such as melancholia and manic conditions.

*The Scientific Board of the California Medical Association has a Scientific Advisory Panel for each of 22 recognized specialties of medical practice. Each Advisory Panel includes representation from the appropriate department of each of the eight medical schools in California, representatives of specialty societies in the field and representatives from the Specialty Sections of the Association. The Advisory Panels are thus broadly and authoritatively based in both academia and practice.

Respondents mentioned that shock therapy would be the treatment of choice in many cases—not necessarily second to other methods of management.

Electroshock therapy would be contraindicated in patients with increased intracranial pressure (a brain tumor, for example) or a recent myocardial infarction. Other conditions which, depending on the patient and the necessity for therapeutic intervention, might be contraindications include hypertension, tuberculosis, skeletal or seizure disorders, and psychoneuroses.

Examination of Orthopedic Hardware

QUESTION:

- (1) Would good medical practice require that surgically removed orthopedic hardware be routinely sent to the pathology laboratory for examination?*
- (2) Is it customary for a patient to be charged for the above examination? (Asked by the Hospital Council of Northern California)*

OPINION:

In the opinion of the Advisory Panels on Pathology and Orthopedics, it is customary medical practice for surgically removed orthopedic hardware to be sent to the pathology laboratory for examination. Most members of the panels felt that this practice is part of proper record keeping, but that routine examination of the material rarely provides medically important information.

Nearly all respondents agreed that a small charge for the examination is customary and reasonable.